NSF Proposal Preparation Tips for Business Managers

Electronic Requirements

Must be submitted electronically via the NSF FastLane

PI and Co-PIs must have an NSF FastLane account set up, contact Pat Gray in RA&F for assistance

Format of the Proposal

Each section of the proposal that is uploaded to the FastLane must be individually paginated

Font requirements: Arial, Courier New or Palatino Linotype at a font size of 10 points or larger; Times New Roman at a font size of 11 points or larger; or Computer Modern family of fonts at a font size of 11 points or larger

A font size of less than 10 points may be used for mathematical formulas or equations, figure, table or diagram captions and when using a Symbol font to insert Greek letters or special characters. PIs are cautioned, however, that the text must still be readable.

One inch margin on each side

No more than 6 lines of type within a vertical space of one inch

Type density including characters and spaces must be no more than 15 characters per inch

A standard, single-column format should be used in the body of the proposal

Failure to submit all required sections of the proposal may result in the proposal being returned without review.

Cover Page

Select the program announcement/solicitation number

Select the program under the Unit for Consideration

Project Summary

Must be one page in length

Include both intellectual merit and broader impacts

NSF encourages the use of separate headings for both the intellectual merit and broader impacts in the one page project summary
Project Description

Must not exceed 15 pages

Results from Prior NSF Support is limited to 5 pages and is included in the 15 page limit

Visual materials such as graphs and charts are included in the 15 page limit

URLs cannot be used in Project Description

References Cited

Reference information is required

No page limitation

Used for bibliographic citations only

Use of et. al. is not allowed

Biographical Sketches

Required for all senior project personnel

Limited to two pages

Should not include personal information (home address, date of birth, etc.)

Budget and Budget Justification

Each proposal must contain a budget for each year of support requested

Budget justification is required for all proposals and is limited to three pages

Justification should provide detail for each item requested on the budget

Cost Sharing

The use of voluntary committed cost sharing on solicited and unsolicited proposals is prohibited

Resources necessary for the project should be included in the facilities sections and the description should be narrative in nature and must not include any quantifiable financial information

Mandatory cost sharing will only be allowed when explicitly authorized by NSF and when included in the proposal budget on Line M the commitment of funds becomes legally binding and is subject to audit
Failure to provide the level of cost sharing required by NSF may result in termination of the award, disallowance of award costs and/or refund of award fund to NSF by the awardee.

**Special Information and Supplementary Documentation**

Proposals that include funding for postdoctoral researchers must include, as a supplementary document, a description of the mentoring activities that will be provided. Proposals which do not include the mentoring section will be returned without review.

All proposals must include plans for data management and sharing of the products of research, or assert the absence of the need for such plans. Fastlane will not permit submission of a proposal that is missing a data management plan.

Should not be used to circumvent 15 page project description limitation

Not considered an appendix, in fact, appendices may not be included unless authorized by NSF in writing.

Letters of support should not be submitted as they are not a standard component of an NSF proposal.